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WHO WANTED
TO HELP

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The man who wanted to help

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The Man Who Wanted To Help

BY
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"POSSIBILITIES," ETC.



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Many persons do not know their own names. They know the names their parents gave them in childhood, the names which people use in addressing them, but they do not know the names people use when speaking of them. Sooner or later every one has some other name than the one of his childhood. In ancient Athens the street boys used to say when they saw Aristides, "There goes 'The Just.' " So in Babylon, they called Alexander "The Great," and in Rome, Nero "The Cruel."

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One element of a person's life may give him his new name; and when people think of Judas they call him a name he probably never heard, "The Betrayer," and when they think of Arnold they say, "The Traitor," and of Washington, "The Good."

Occasionally, the name thus given to a person indicates a peculiar and noticeable characteristic. On General Grant's tomb at Riverside are cut the words he used in a season of great political discord, "Let us have peace;" so he is known as "The Man of Peace." Lincoln said toward the close of the Rebellion, "With malice toward none, with charity for all," and to-day Lincoln

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is called “The Man of Charity.” Because Napoleon claimed that a special field of glory had been pre-destined for him, he was named “The Man of Destiny.”

Once some parents who had poetry in their natures gave their son a name ever to be associated with an event of his infancy. They called him “Moses,” meaning “drawn out,” because he had been drawn out of the river Nile, where in a wicker basket he had been exposed to death. That name is good so far as it goes. But every one after a while *earns* a name; good or bad, as it may be, still he earns it, and it is his distinctively. The name of our childhood is imposed upon us, we

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have nothing to say about it ; but our later name we decide entirely for ourselves. Jonathan Jackson said of his boy, "His name is Thomas;" and so it was until the boy became a man and earned the name "Stone-wall."

If any one in after years is to be remembered as "The Man who Wanted to Help," he must be noble-souled. He does not so much need a large occasion as a thoughtful heart. Opportunity always is at hand to him who is on the lookout for helpfulness. The Romans used to make opportunity a god and write her name "Opportunity," as though she was ready to present herself to any one who would welcome her.

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She is immediately at the side of all who will use her. Only, we need to keep our eyes wide open lest we shall not recognize her presence. She has a strange way of keeping a little bit out of sight until she sees us looking for her; then she makes herself known.

It might have been thought that this poetically-named young man had no special opportunity for nobility of soul. He lived in a palace, surrounded by luxury. The popular opinion is that the softness of a king's court robs a person of his vigor. It often does. Petting *may* enervate; making us so dependent upon itself that we become absorbed in receiving attention and forgetful of giving

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it. But it need not. William I., of Germany, always slept on a hard bed so that the luxury of his palace might not unfit him for stern war. There is more than one way of using comforts so that they shall be our servants, not our masters. What way Moses used we do not know; but when he steps upon the scene of public action his spirit is as strong and virile as that of a knight. The chevalier Bayard and all those high souls that defended the helpless, guarded the right and fought for the good, were, every man of them, his brothers.

Three times, and three times only do we catch a glimpse of him in his

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early years. Once he is out walking. He sees a case of oppression: an Egyptian is beating an Israelite. The odds are all with the Egyptian; he is master, the other is slave; he has legal rights, the other has none. Besides, the Egyptian is the stronger man and is worsting the Israelite. What should Moses do? In his heart burned a desire to help. He sprang to the side of the under man, and in rescuing him, slew the Egyptian. It was a most unfortunate action. It was like Uncle Tom's interfering with the slave-master who was abusing Cassy; the slave-master turned upon Uncle Tom and had him lashed. Moses only imperiled

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his own life and the welfare of his friends by his effort at help; he made the bad worse.

Will he do better the next time? Men who are eager to help soon find their opportunity, and Moses found his the very next day, when he was out walking. He went where the despised Hebrews had their Ghetto. Two of them were fighting; one was wrong, the other right. Should he get mixed up in their quarrel? What responsibility was it of his? His desire to help overleaped all such questions; he tried to bring peace by reasoning with the man who was wrong. But in vain; his words were thrown back at him with cruel taunts. A second

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time the man who wanted to help had failed.

What will happen now? It is not enough to be earnest; a man has also to be wise. The knowing how to help is as essential as the desiring to help. Oftentimes the humiliation caused by misdirected efforts opens the eyes to the necessity of wise method. And so the best thing happened to the man who wanted to help that could happen. Pharaoh, believing him to be dangerous, determined to kill him. There was nothing to be done now but flee. And away he went, passing in an instant from wealth to poverty. His good clothes were gone, his position as a king's son was gone; everything was gone

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that men usually consider essential to helpfulness. Stripped of all external power, whatever he is to accomplish now must be through his own personality. Can such a man find a sphere for helping? We shall see. All will depend upon the spirit that animates him; if he lets his failures and disappointments dull his interest in men, we shall hear no more from him; but if he keeps a kindly heart, then he will be a blessing.

He came to a well. As he sat resting beside it, seven shepherdesses brought up their flocks. They drew water and filled the troughs for their sheep. They had no more than done this before a band of rough men pushed to the well bringing their

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sheep. Seeing the water already drawn in the troughs, they with brute force drove back the sheep of the women and put their own at the troughs. Such an occurrence as this was not unusual. The women had suffered from it repeatedly, and no one had thought much of its meanness. But to-day there is a man at hand different from any who has ever witnessed this transaction. He has a spirit in him that responds to need. He sees this injustice, and what does he do but spring to the relief of the defenseless women, force the thieving men away, and then gallantly complete his kindness by filling the emptied troughs for those who had been assailed. It was

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a great risk he ran; but better far to imperil his life than dampen the enthusiasm of his chivalry by hesitating to act. That evening when those shepherdesses, reaching home earlier than was their wont, explained their timely coming, they sang the praises of a man who, the third time trying to help, had at last succeeded.

From now on this one whose whole early life is summed up in these three deeds was to know how to help. The man who wanted to help has become the man who can help. He is going to study human nature in himself and see what will help *him*; he is going to study flocks, too, and see how to lead them and

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care for them, and he will learn many a lesson of patience and forbearance as well as of purpose ; he also is going to commune with God, and thus there will come sweetness and gentleness into his love for his fellows, and the result will be, that he whose desire to help outlived all failures will some day be mentioned as perhaps the most useful man the world has ever known.

A long story for an illustration, you say. Ah, but what is more interesting than a bit of personal experience, and what could picture our thought better ! There are really but two classes of people in our world—those who want to help, and those who want to be helped. It is the

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second class into which many a man gets, either purposely or unwittingly. It is so large that no one is ever lonesome for company in it. How true to life the dream that came to a public-spirited leader: He and several others started to pull a heavy coach uphill. A rope was fastened about the front part, and they all took hold together, the leader at their head. The signal to start was given, and away the coach went, amid much enthusiasm. How pleasant it all is, thought the leader; and so did the others seem to think, for he heard their merry voices and was delighted at their interest and purpose. They would soon be at the top of the hill! It was not long, however, before

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the coach seemed heavier to the leader than at first. Reluctant to say anything that would discourage the others, he closed his lips and resolved that he would put all his energy into the work. His quick ear did note the fact that no sounds came from those behind him, but interpreting their silence by his own, he held the rope the tighter and pulled the harder. But at last he could not budge the coach an inch. Pull as he would, it was in vain. He turned to speak to those behind him. Not one was there! They had disappeared! But where? He went to the coach, looked in, and there they all were, asleep. One by one they had become "tired," and had gotten

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in while he had been pulling them, as well as the coach, uphill!

True to life indeed! Hosts of people seem to feel that they must never outgrow their babyhood, but should be *carried* all their days. Especially when the uphill work of life comes are they glad to have some one else do that work while they profit by it. No one wonders that they feel so; it is the easiest way to live, free from strain and burden, and free, too, from responsibility. It is the way the tramp lives, and every man has somewhat of the tramp in him. A study of the “unemployed classes” in England brings out the fact that thousands of men will take work if

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it is brought to them, but they never make an effort to seek it.

And yet Ruskin was right when he said: "There is no true potency but that of help; nor true ambition but ambition to save." It exalts a heart to bend itself to another's uplift, and it glorifies a life to remedy the world's ills. No small man ever yet had such purposes; he could not have them and remain small. They are large, and they have enlarging power. As soon as a person has a helpful intention in his heart he looms up; he becomes a factor in a home or in society that will eventually make an impression. If Moses has resolved that his life motive shall be to

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help the needy, he may act stumblingly at first, but he will break a bondage at the last. John Brown did not know the speediest and wisest way to end negro slavery in the South, but when, as answer to the cry of three million human hearts calling to him for deliverance, he determined to do something, or say something, or suffer something that would put an eternal period to that slavery, the final result was sure. Say that his act in seizing Harper's Ferry was foolish; say that when he was put to death his death was in clear conformity to law. Still, indiscreet as he was, he had good part in starting a movement carrying in its sweep the extinction of slavery, and hundreds

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of thousands of soldiers kept step to the marching of John Brown's soul as they irresistibly forced slavery to its death.

It cheers a man's very heart to know what he can accomplish in life simply by "wanting to help." If that desire is lodged once and forever in his soul and cannot be damped or dissipated by obstacles, some hurtful thing will surely be over-powered, and some good cause will surely be built up. David is a mere stripling as Goliath sees him, and many a one might think his slight form and boyish face stand for impotency. Goliath scorns him. He little knows that in this youth is a purpose to help! It seems very

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sentimental and impracticable. What can come of it? This can come of it—that animated by it the youth will hunt up some way of accomplishing help: if not by armor, then by a sling. And this always comes of such a purpose: the man who has it becomes a pathfinder for something beneficent. It quickens his perceptions of needs, it deepens his sympathies, it stirs his courage. “Come and help us,” has been the voice heard, and when the answer has gone back, “We will help you or die in the attempt,” the men who have so answered, in themselves have become noble and to others have brought deliverance. That purpose shook a self satisfied scholastic out of his

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composure, and made Paul's heart burn with a new energy and his influence assume a new blessedness. All the good there is in a man is waked up when he becomes the man who wants to help.

And then what may result from his purpose! Every reform born into the world has come from a heart holding this purpose: all prison improvement, all educational advance, all removal of unjust laws. Elizabeth Fry, and Froebel, and Peel were inspired by it. It is a perilous thing often; it landed Paul in a jail because he was bound to help the man of Macedonia; it killed Telema-chus because he was bound to stop gladiatorial murders. But whether

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in jail, or out of jail, Paul the helper started the salvation of Europe, and whether dead or alive, Telemachus the helper ended gladiatorial murders. Even if we do not succeed in our efforts to help as we hoped, others learning by our mistakes, if mistakes they were, will take up our efforts where we laid them down and will forward them toward the goal. But what men call our mistakes are not always actual mistakes; often they are the very wisest and best deeds that the circumstances admitted. One person's failure may inflame zeal in scores of others. When Ellsworth was shot at Alexandria, thousands upon thousands of men leaped to the defense of the

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cause for which he perished. The man who wants to help is humanity's hero. He is not forgotten ; he never lives wholly in vain. In some good hour men call him to mind and they follow him. Winkelried dies with the spears of the enemy piercing his breast—but the man who tried to open a path of deliverance, henceforth is an inspirer to deeds of bravest loyalty and staunchest devotion.

It is always costly to be the man who wants to help. Personal ambitions have to be laid aside ; the selfish instincts have to be opposed and even curbed. Usually a man can lift another only by putting himself beneath him, and can help a cause

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only by making sacrifice for it. It is very seldom that an inventor works out an invention, or a poet a poem, excepting through a lonely isolation from the world's gaiety; and it is just as seldom that a helper biesses his fellows excepting as he has special hours wherein he dwells apart from the world's pleasures. But the result justifies the effort. When Moses started to lend a hand to every needy situation, it was inevitable that he would be misunderstood. If he saw a social wrong, he tried to right it; if he saw oppression by employers or faithlessness by employees, he tried to remedy them. He wished public education to prosper, and every principle of sanitation to prevail. He

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had a heart and an eye for every possible thing that he thought would make men happy and good. And the more his interest in the world's needs absorbed him, the less could selfish men understand him. But he had his reward; high thoughts became his guests, generous impulses filled his soul, sweetness and tenderness swayed his heart. Then, too, there came the ripening of his powers; starting to help in one thing, he learned how to help in many things. He grew in comprehension of judgment, and grew also into the very nature and joys of God.

Cost then what it may, a noble soul will aspire to be helpful. For to be otherwise is to be a parasite on

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the social or religious organism. The mistletoe fastens itself upon an oak or apple-tree, forces its roots within, appropriates the sap, and then, fed by another's life, flourishes.

Even some animals fasten themselves on other animals, and, feeding on tissues that do not belong to themselves, grow fat and thrive. And there are birds, like the cowbird and the European cuckoo, that never build a nest for themselves, but, searching until they find a nest built by the energy of another, they seize it as their own. There is something ignoble, contemptible, in being a parasitic plant or bird, and it is just as ignoble, just as contemptible to be a parasitic man, living wholly on

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what others provide. Such a man is virtually a thief; he steals his living. He is worse; he drinks another's life-blood.

The man who wants to help scorns to be a "parasite." Benefiting as he does by the Christian civilization that has nourished him, he resolves to add to, not detract from, that civilization. He will be a giver to the world's good as well as a receiver. Balfour, in his "Foundations of Belief," expresses the man's purpose. He says, "that even if we offer no personal influence to Christianity, even if we deny its claims, we still live on it." And then he adds: "Biologists tell us of parasites that live, and can only live, within the

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bodies of animals more highly organized than themselves. For them their luckless host has to find food, to digest it, and convert it into nourishment, which they consume without exertion and assimilate without difficulty. Their structure is of the simplest kind. Their host sees for them, so they need no eyes; he hears for them, so they need no ears; he works for them and contrives for them, so they need but feeble muscles and an undeveloped nervous system. But are we to conclude from this that for the animal kingdom eyes and ears, powerful limbs and complex nerves are superfluities? They are superfluities for the parasite only because they have first been necessi-

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ties for the host, and when the host perishes, the parasite, in their absence, is likely to perish also.” “No,” the man who wants to help says, “I will not be a parasite. The convictions of honor that underlie my life, the home refinement in which I grew up, the standards of right and purity that I hold, the ideals of purpose and behavior in which I was nourished, have all come from Christianity; and these things, the best things within me and around me, shall not find me merely existing by them, but they shall find me laboring for them. They have helped me, and I will help them.”

Anything less than this purpose is fatal to a man’s moral vigor; he

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grows weak and vitiated without it. Lowell a few years since in England had occasion to refer to those who, having obtained all their moral glory through Christian institutions, afterward repudiated those institutions. This was his comparison: “They have been helped to climb to the lofty place in which they are, by a ladder, and now they turn around and kick down the very ladder that lifted them.” Freely having received, why not freely give? To feel no desire to add to the world’s good is to be mean-spirited.

What a watchword that was, spoken by her mother to Frances Willard: “My child, enter every open door.” That watchword was

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a clarion note summoning Frances Willard to usefulness. With eyes that scanned the needs of society as an Indian scout in time of war scans the horizon, she found doors, yes, and open doors, for her efforts. It was not a day when woman was untrammelled for the putting forth of her powers of help. Extraordinary moral courage was needed; it seemed so out of place for a woman to be publicly advocating the side of the oppressed, and to be lifting her voice for reform! But she "took upon her soul the woes which fill the drunkard's home and fall with such crushing force upon the timid, trusting, patient keeper of that home." As the heart of Bruce was

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thrown into the midst of the fight, she threw herself into the temperance cause, into every cause that she believed would bless woman and so would bless the world. She thought of little children and their welfare, of growing youth and their purity; she lifted a banner inscribed, "For God, for home and native land," and marching under it herself, she gathered to it tens of thousands who follow it now and will follow it always. And when Frances Willard resolved "*I will* enter every open door," she made herself an energy whose influence became world-wide and eternal.

If a person will only take to himself such a resolve, all life will be

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changed for him, and he will help change all life for many another. The suggestion for such a resolve often comes strangely. Many a man has thought the windows of heaven ought to open and a voice in tones of commanding authority speak to him therefrom, if he were to receive the inspiration necessary to such a new energy. Seldom, indeed, is such a voice heard—once in a century, by an Augustine in the garden, and as the voice speaks he learns that he is to drop all his dawdling and selfishness, and be a man of action, purity, and human succor. But usually the way is this, as it was with the father of Dr. William M. Taylor, in Scotland. His father was

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going to mill, with a sack of grain laid over a horse's back. The bridle path was rough, the horse stumbled, and the sack fell off. Too old to replace it, he wondered who would help him. A man came in sight. His heart sank when he saw that he was the nobleman of an adjoining castle. How could he ask aid of *him!* But he did not have to ask; the nobleman had his own life-motto, and dismounting, voiced it, "Let me help you, John." The load was soon on the horse. "Please, your lordship," said John, "how shall I ever thank you for your kindness?" This was the reply—and once heard by any man, it is all the inspiration for helpful purpose he

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can ask—"Whenever you see another man as sorely needing assistance as you were just now, help him; and that will be thanking me."

What inspiring deeds have sprung from this purpose! When we know how it has wrought changes, turning despair into hope and feebleness into power, we marvel that everybody does not seek it and live by it. There is such a thing as the *genius* of help. It may be acquired. It is never denied any man who wishes it. But help is so important a factor in human life that no one can ever expect the genius of help to be his, as water falls, of itself. Help to be help must be an actual benefit. Any-

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thing that injures, whatever the spirit in which it is done, is not help, but hurt. Is not this, then, a definition of the origin of help—"It springs from wisdom that is inspired by love?" When Harriet Beecher Stowe's work was summed up—and that work lay back of John Brown's and Abraham Lincoln's and the Emancipation Proclamation—it was said that the whole explanation of her influence lay in her power of sympathy. Yes, sympathy indeed, but with what consummate skill she told the story that went deep into the heart and conscience of the American nation, and fixed itself in memory—and would not let itself be forgotten until that story became a

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story of the past and not of the present. Love there must be, but wisdom, too, lest the very one whom we would strengthen, we weaken—and the very one we would encourage to activity we encourage in listlessness. Astoria Hill understood all this when she went into the heart of London's poorest districts, took old buildings and made them clean, healthful and well-equipped dwellings. Ruskin understood it when he furnished most, if not all, of the money for this work. Miss Hill sat down beside the women and children, living with them, correcting them, showing her own example of careful housekeeping, and *insisting that rents should be paid*—and she

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lifted the people, not lowered them —and hers was help indeed.

What a world of need ours is! Where is the heart that does not lack cheer, and comfort, and strength? To give these is to give much. To help the world think straight, to help it to be true, is much. The older man who simply prayed God to open a young man's eyes to know that God's chariots and horsemen are on the side of the right, helped the young man. Esther helped when she made petition for an endangered race. Marcus Aurelius helped when he wrote of courage and hope. Andrew helped when he led another to the great Teacher. Philip helped when

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he explained the meaning of history. The man who tramping out from Rome to meet Paul the prisoner put gladness in his heart, helped. Tolstoi tells of the beggar to whom he said, "Brother, I have no money"—and the beggar grasped his hand with delight because he called him "Brother." Every home in which we live needs brightening; every friend we have needs inspiriting; every earnest cause needs strengthening. Some persons sit by the wayside begging; others walk life's path bestowing. "I get all I can," the sponge says; "I give all I can," the light says. "'Tis only noble to be good," is wise; "'tis only noble to be helpful" is wiser.

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“All men,” said Emerson, “are benefactors or malefactors.” Gladstone visited a poor sick boy whom he had seen sweeping the street crossings. Phillips Brooks cared for an infant child in the slums that its mother might get out to the fresh air. Humboldt gave Agassiz, resigning his studies because he could not meet his expenses, a check, wherewith he completed his studies. Christ put His shoulder under other men’s burdens and helped every needy heart and cause He could find.

A boat was stranded. Men were trying to push it off the sand into the deeper water and float it. Progress was slow. One man seemed to

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shirk. His comrade looked up and saw him. Then he said, "Have you hope of heaven?" "Yes," the man answered quickly. "Then take hold and help!"

And so I say to every man the world over who would have hope of heaven, "Take hold and **HELP.**"

"If any little word of mine can make a
 life the brighter,
If any little song of mine can make a
 heart the lighter,
God help me speak the little word, and
 take my life of singing,
And drop it in some lonely vale, to set
 the echoes ringing."

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